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## SCIENTISTS FIND WAY TO IDENTIFY WHO IS COVID SUSCEPTIBLE, WHO IS NOT

For the first time, scientists have been able to identify the genetic and molecular basis of individual susceptibility to infection, that will give a clearer picture as to who could contract a more severe form of Covid-19, and who could be symptomatic or asymptomatic.

Being able to identify patients' susceptibility to severe pneumonia and their responsiveness to specific drugs will allow rapid public health treatment interventions.

Studies by Italian scientists from the Medical Genetics Unit at the University Hospital of Siena, in collaboration with the Siena Artificial Intelligence Lab, were based on findings that clinical presentation of Covid-19 varied from patient to patient, and understanding individual genetic susceptibility to the disease was vital to prognosis, prevention, and development of new treatments.

Understanding the genetic profile of patients may allow the repurposing of existing medicines for specific therapeutic approaches against Covid-19, as well as speeding the development of new antiviral drugs.

Using whole exome sequencing (WES) to study the first data from 130 Covid patients from Siena and other Tuscan institutions, scientists were able to uncover a number of common susceptibility genes in patients that were linked to a favourable or unfavourable outcome of infection.

The study is expected to have significant implications for health and healthcare policy.

Researchers treated each patient as an independent case.

"We were able to identify for each patient an average of three pathogenic (disease-causing) mutations involved in susceptibility to Covid infection," Professor Alessandra Renieri, Director of the Medical Genetics Unit at the University Hospital of Siena, Italy, said.

The research was presented to the 53rd annual conference of the European Society of Human Genetics held online due to the Covid-19 pandemic on Saturday.